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Letter dated 10 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Please find enclosed the report entitled "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women" for the annual ministerial review to be held during the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2010 of the Economic and Social Council (see annex).

My Government would be highly appreciative if you would circulate the aforementioned report as a document of the Council, under item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Park **In-kook**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/2010/1

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Annex to the letter dated 10 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Voluntary national presentation of the Republic of Korea: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

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Executive summary

By joining the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on 1 January 2010, the Republic of Korea has successfully transformed itself from a partner country into a donor country. The Framework Act on International Development Cooperation was subsequently legislated. It puts emphasis on the promotion of women's rights and gender equality, reflecting the strong will of the Korean Government to implement the internationally agreed commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women as specified in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

In explaining how the Republic of Korea has been able to evolve from a poverty-stricken country to a donor country, it is necessary to understand the significance of women in the socio-economic development of the country. This is in line with Goal 3, according to which the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is a necessary condition to eliminate poverty. The Republic of Korea has taken determined steps to raise the political and economic capacities of women by incorporating them into the progress of socio-economic development and by reflecting their needs and interests in national policy planning. As a result, the representation of women has improved, women have been empowered through extended participation in economic activities and their human rights are increasingly better ensured. In particular, women's labour participation has made it possible to break the cycle of poverty. The Republic of Korea is therefore willing to share and utilize its extensive experience in aligning socio-economic development with the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment it has accumulated in the course of transforming from one of the poorest countries in the world into a donor country. In doing so, the Republic of Korea will contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals aiming to eradicate poverty.

I. The Republic of Korea's success in economic and social development

A. Transformation into a donor country

1. The Republic of Korea became the twenty-fourth member of the Development Assistance Committee of OECD on 1 January 2010. In the course of building its economy, the Republic of Korea relied on assistance from the international community, receiving a total of $12.8 billion in aid.[1] Emergency relief helped the Korean people recover from the aftermath of the Korean War (1950-1953) and rebuild the country. In 1960, with the enactment of the Foreign Investment Promotion Act, the Republic of Korea started to actively attract foreign investments from developed countries and effectively utilized foreign resources through the execution of its Five-year Economic Development Plan. At the same time, aid in the form of grants to the Republic of Korea began to decrease and was increasingly replaced by loans.

[1] Introduction on Korea's official development assistance, http://www.odakorea.go.kr/html/intro/history.php?&bid=a31, retrieved on 5 April 2010.

2. From 1965 to 1980, while it was known as a partner country, the Republic of Korea took steps to enhance its contribution to international society. Using its own resources, the Korean Government initiated a training programme for developing countries in 1965. The Republic of Korea also began to dispatch experts in 1967, provided equipment and resources assistance in 1977 and invited leading figures from developing countries to deliver education programmes in 1985. Throughout the process, the Republic of Korea gradually expanded self-funded assistance. In 1995, the Republic of Korea was removed from the World Bank's lending list and this marked the end of its history as a partner country. This successful development experience of the Republic of Korea is offering motivation to many developing countries which wish to reaffirm their commitment to building their national economy.

B. Official development assistance policy directions and implementation system

3. In December 2009, the National Assembly passed the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation, which was promulgated in January 2010.[2] The objective of the Act is to enhance the consistency and effectiveness of the Republic of Korea's official development assistance (ODA) policy, and to contribute to the co-prosperity of humankind and the promotion of international peace.

4. Article 3 of the Act prescribes basic provisions for poverty eradication in developing countries, for improving children and women's rights, for achieving gender equality, for the realization of sustainable development and humanitarianism, for expanding economic cooperation with partner countries and for the promotion of international peace and prosperity. The fact that women's rights and gender equality are included in the Act is a manifestation of the Korean Government's strong will to implement the internationally agreed commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women as specified in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

5. The Republic of Korea's structure of ODA policy implementation is based on two main pillars — grant aids administrated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and concessional loans overseen by the Ministry of Strategy and Finance. Grants, composed of grant aid and technical cooperation programmes, are implemented by the Korea International Cooperation Agency under the policy guidelines of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Concessional loans are managed by the Economic Development Cooperation Fund, administered by the Export-Import Bank of Korea under the supervision of the Ministry of Strategy and Finance.

6. The Committee for International Development Cooperation was established in January 2006 under the supervision of the Prime Minister's Office. The primary function of the Committee is to assess major development cooperation policies, midterm ODA plans, annual policy implementation plans and ODA programme performance, as well as to deliberate and coordinate overseas emergency disaster relief programmes and non-governmental organization support programmes.[3]

[2] The Act will enter into force six months after the date of its promulgation.

[3] ODA Korea, http://www.odakorea.go.kr/html.intro/propulsion_2.php?&bid=a42, retrieved on 20 April 2010.

7. In 2009, the Korea International Cooperation Agency also introduced a gender-sensitive officer system to ensure that gender perspectives are well-reflected in the implementation of ODA.[4]

II. Socio-economic development, gender quality and women's empowerment

8. The Republic of Korea's gross domestic product (GDP) increased rapidly, at an annual average rate of 6 per cent from 1975 to 2005.[5] The nation's per capita GDP has also risen sharply over the decades, from $251 in 1970 to $19,153 in 2008.[6] Due to its outstanding economic development, the Republic of Korea has been able to shed its status as one of the world's poorest countries in the 1950s, and has become a donor and a Development Assistance Committee member.

9. It should be noted that women played a significant role in the Republic of Korea's unprecedented economic development. The Republic of Korea has taken steps to develop the political and economic capacities of women by incorporating them into the process of socio-economic development, reflecting their needs and interest in national planning and establishing a systemic national machinery committed to advancing the status of women.

A. National plans for the promotion of gender equality

10. One of the most important tasks of economic and social development is to build women's capacity so that they can function as agents of development and not become mere beneficiaries. In order to build their capacity, it is vital to widely reflect their needs and interests in national plans for economic and social development.

11. Bearing that in mind, the Republic of Korea expanded the utilization of women resources during the 1960s, the industrialization period. In the 1980s, the Korean Government started to incorporate women into various development issues, based on a strong belief that they should form an integral part of national development.[7] Women's issues were included for the first time in the sixth Five-year Economic and Social Development Plan (1987-1991), which laid out concrete policies aimed at promoting the utilization of women resources, building their capacity and improving welfare schemes for them.[8]

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[4] Coinciding with the structural reorganization of the Korea International Cooperation Agency on 31 December 2009, a gender-sensitive officer system was established to ensure gender mainstreaming in the Agency's development assistance programmes and to promote gender equality through ODA. The system comprises seven officers in the five specific fields of policy planning, budgeting, execution, evaluation and monitoring, as well as statistics and research.

[5] United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2007/2008* (UNDP, 2007), p. 277.

[6] Bank of Korea, unpublished data.

[7] Ministry of Political Affairs (II) (1989), *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: First and Second Periodic Reports of the Republic of Korea*, Ministry of Political Affairs (II), p. 81.

[8] Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (1987), *Sixth Five-year Economic and Social Development Plan: Health and Social Sector Plans (1987-1991)*, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

12. Notably, the Republic of Korea's women policies, aligned with national-level economic and social development planning, were heavily affected by the international agenda dedicated to advancing women's status and realizing gender equality. In 1983, the Republic of Korea signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and then ratified the Convention one year later, in 1984. With the ratification, the Convention came into force with the same effect as domestic law, bringing forth a great turnaround in raising public awareness on gender equality and women's development.[9] Along with the sixth Five-year Economic and Social Development Plan, the seventh Plan (1992-1996) also addressed women's issues as a core policy for economic advancement.

13. The Women's Development Act was legislated in 1995 with the aim of promoting gender equality and fostering women's development in all realms of society, including the political, economic and social sectors. Under the Act, a basic plan was drawn up every five years, and the Women's Development Fund was set up to implement various projects aimed at enhancing women's status and to support the construction and operation of women's facilities.

14. The First Basic Plan for Women's Policies, covering the period between 1998 and 2002, can be defined as a phase for building the institutional framework which paved the way for the abolishment of some major gender-discriminatory laws and practices, the expansion of women's participation in policymaking and the enhancement of maternal protection. The objectives of the second Plan, covering the period between 2003 and 2007, included efforts to instil a gender-equality perspective in all Government policies by introducing gender mainstreaming in policymaking. The Plan expanded the institutional infrastructure for gender-responsive budgeting, gender-sensitive statistics and gender impact assessments.

B. National machinery for the advancement of the status of women

15. The Republic of Korea has made efforts to strengthen its institutional mechanisms for the efficient management of gender-equality issues. In terms of governmental organization, the Ministry of Gender Equality was established to oversee women's policies in a more holistic manner. Inter-ministerial coordination became more effective through the founding of the Women's Policy Coordination Committee in 2003, and the Woman's Affairs Committee was created to deal with women's issues in the legislative branch.

16. The Ministry of Gender Equality was established in January 2001 as the national machinery responsible for planning and integrating Government policies for women. The Minister, as a member of the cabinet, advises the President on women's affairs and introduces a gender perspective into major policies at the highest level. The Ministry of Gender Equality was preceded by the Ministry of Political Affairs (II) and the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs. Following Government reorganization, the Ministry was restructured into the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in 2010. The Ministry is currently charged with formulating and coordinating gender-equality policies in a holistic manner,

[9] Ministry of Political Affairs (II) (1989), *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: First and Second Periodic Reports of the Republic of Korea*, Ministry of Political Affairs (II), pp. 39-43.

including women's social participation, gender impact assessment and analysis, women resources development and utilization, family and multicultural family support, prevention of sexual and domestic violence and protection for victims of violence.

17. In 2003, the Women's Policy Coordination Committee was founded under the Office of the Prime Minister in accordance with article 11 of the Women's Development Act. Chaired by the Prime Minister and vice-chaired by the Minister of Gender Equality and Family, the Committee is responsible for bringing together the broad diversity of women-related policies and programmes administered by Government ministries and for deliberating on gender equality agendas.[10]

18. Under the Women's Development Act, Gender Policy Coordinator positions have also been instituted in central Government ministries to give gender mainstreaming a head start. The Act requires each ministry to designate an assistant minister or an equivalent public official as Gender Policy Coordinator, who is tasked with planning and implementing effective policies for women. They are also responsible for coordinating yearly action plans to implement the Basic Women's Development Plan, monitoring the progress in implementation, conducting gender impact analyses and assessments and raising the status of female public officials.

19. In addition, the Korean Women's Development Institute and the Korean Institute of Gender Equality Promotion and Education were established in 1983 and 2003, respectively, to conduct research on women's issues and to provide education on gender equality.

20. With a Government ministry that oversees the country's overall gender-equality policies, a research institute that conducts policy research on gender agendas and an educational institute that provides gender-equality education for public officials, the Republic of Korea has established a three-dimensional national system for the advancement of the status of women.

C. Measures for the promotion of women's representation

21. Improving women's representation in the public sector is a necessary requirement for the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The United Nations and most international aid organizations have thus set the extent of women's political representation as a core criterion for assessing the degree of achievement of Goal 3.

22. The Korean Government has been implementing various specific legal and institutional measures to expand the participation of women in society. In politics, the Political Parties Act has been amended so that, for general elections and local council elections, political parties are required to include women in 50 per cent or more of their nominations for the proportional seats. It also recommends 30 per cent or more of the candidates running for election in local districts to be women. As a result, the ratio of woman parliamentarians rose considerably, from 5.9 per cent during the sixteenth National Assembly (2000-2004) to 13.7 per cent during the eighteenth National Assembly (2008-2012).

[10] Kim, W. H., Y. J. Baek and B. S. Park (2008), *Implementation Structures of Gender Policies in 8 Countries*. Korean Women's Development Institute.

23. A Participation Target System is in place to raise women's representation in Government advisory committees. A Recruitment Target System is also in operation and will remain in effect until 2011, with a view to increasing the number of female public officials in rank four managerial positions (director level) or higher in central Government ministries. The two systems are expected to raise the proportion of women in Government advisory committees to 40 per cent by 2012, and the ratio of rank four female public officials to 10 per cent by 2011, representing an approximately twofold increase compared with 2006.

24. The Korean Government is also committed to improving gender-imbalanced workforce structures in which women traditionally have been underrepresented, through active measures such as the Recruitment Target System for Women, the Gender Equality Recruitment Initiative in Public Service, the Recruitment Target System for Women Professors, the Appointment Target System for School Principals and Vice-principals and the Recruitment Target System for Women in Science and Technology.

D. Institutional support for women's economic activities

25. Women's participation in the labour market is regarded as a key means of eliminating poverty. Once women take part in income production activities, they not only generate their own financial resources, but also gain economic empowerment in both the private and the public spheres. The Republic of Korea has endeavoured to facilitate women's economic participation in the course of developing its economy and society. In recent years, efforts are being concentrated on raising the labour share of women by fostering a female-friendly labour environment.

26. During the rapid economic growth period spanning the 1960s to the 1980s, although women's participation in the agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors declined, their employment in the manufacturing and service sectors saw a sharp rise.[11] In 1963, the proportion of women working in the agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors reached 23.9 per cent. By 1985, the ratio had dropped to 8.9 per cent.[12] During the same period, the share of women employed in manufacturing increased from 2.4 per cent to 9 per cent. Women employed in indirect social capital and other service industries represented 19.9 per cent of all working women in 1985, up by more than two-fold compared with the 8.5 per cent of 1963.

27. The increase in women's economic participation led to a rise in household income levels, which again contributed to breaking the cycle of poverty. Even so, women often experienced gender discrimination in their workplace, mainly owing to the social prejudice that existed against working women. The Korean Government addressed this problem early on by fostering a social environment that eliminates employment-related discrimination and by providing legal and institutional infrastructure.

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[11] Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (1987), *Sixth Five-year Economic and Social Development Plan: Health and Social Sector Plans (1987-1991)*, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, p. 326.

[12] Korean Statistical Information Service, Recomposition of data from the Survey on the Economically Active Population, http://kosis.kr/, retrieved on 28 April 2010.

28. In 1987, the Equal Employment Act was established to secure equal opportunity and treatment for women in employment, ensure maternity protection, develop women's vocational capacity and enhance women's welfare. In 1991, the Infant Care Act was introduced, pursuant to which the Government concentrated its budget investments in expanding childcare facilities and subsidizing full childcare allowances for households of incomes under certain poverty levels. In December 1991, the Republic of Korea joined the International Labor Organization, stepping up its efforts to protect women's labour rights.

29. In the years following 2000, women's economic participation experienced greater expansion and, accordingly, the need to provide an institutional basis for the reconciliation of work and family life increased significantly. In response to the economic and social changes of the times, the Equal Employment Act was amended and, in 2007, became the Act on Gender Equality in Employment and Support for Work-Family Reconciliation.

30. The Korean Government also encourages the economic independence of women by supporting those who wish to set up their own businesses, mainly through the Business Start-up Subsidy Programmes for Women Engineers and the Business Start-up Subsidy Programmes for Female Heads of Household.[13] The former programme, conceived to enable women with certified technical skills to start their own business, received 10 billion Korean won in funding from the Women's Development Fund from 2003 to 2006. The latter programme, which provided loans to female heads of household to start their own business, was funded with 3 billion Korean won (equivalent to $2.6 million) drawn from the Women's Development Fund from 2004 to 2006. Both programmes, supported by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, were aimed at economically empowering low-income women and at enhancing their capacity to grow their way out of poverty.

III. Utilizing the Republic of Korea's experience in the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women

31. Drawing from its first-hand experience in poverty eradication and women's empowerment gained over the course of its economic and social development, the Republic of Korea is willing to help women in developing countries to play an active role in socio-economic development and thus not be excluded from national development processes. The Republic of Korea is also committed to working together for the achievement of the international community's development goals of poverty eradication and sustainable growth.

32. Based on the understanding that the realization of gender equality depends heavily on the economic independence of women, the Republic of Korea has also prepared various training sessions aimed at women's economic empowerment. Training programmes on business start-ups and employment have been of particular assistance in expanding women's economic participation, building their economic capacity and, ultimately, moving closer to gender equality. In terms of promoting women's rights, assistive measures have been taken to raise public awareness on

[13] Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2005), Sixth Periodic Report on Korea's Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, p. 42.

respecting women's rights and reflect related issues in policy planning. In addition, the number of degree programmes and long-term training programmes for women in developing countries has increased, with the aim of developing qualified women resources. In all these efforts, basic human development for the achievement of gender equality remains at the heart of the Republic of Korea's development assistance activities.

33. The Republic of Korea also seeks to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals by sharing its know-how on women's vocational capacity-building as a foundation for the promotion of women's economic participation and capacity enhancement. In today's information society, information and communications technology (ICT) is opening new possibilities for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. Through ICT education and training, women can transform themselves into software engineers, knowledge workers and social entrepreneurs. In this sense, ICT brings changes to the traditional role division between women and men, and serves as a catalyst for women to assume a central role in development.[14]

34. Among the diversity of development programmes currently in operation, the programmes described below provide linkages with areas in which the Republic of Korea possesses expertise, namely vocational training and ICT.

35. First, targeting the women of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Member Economies, the Republic of Korea runs an ICT training programme for public officials in charge of ICT or gender policies, and for education and training personnel. Under the programme, Korean experts are assigned to visit a Member Economy to deliver training on ICT and female leadership. Between 2003 and 2009, a total of 165 women from 17 APEC members completed the training programme in the Republic of Korea. From 2007 to 2009, a survey on the demand for women's training was conducted in Indonesia, which formed the basis for the development of a customized education programme that benefited 53 Indonesian public officials responsible for gender policies and ICT.

36. Such training programmes cover a range of subject matter, including development trends in global ICT, the Republic of Korea's public informatization policies, benchmarking of advanced ICT and project practices, and women's capacity-building. The project practice course offers a particularly unique experience in that trainees are able to plan ICT projects tailored to their own country's needs. For example, participants from Papua New Guinea developed a project on an emergency call centre for women, in response to the country's lack of infrastructure to support women victims of domestic and other forms of violence. The project practice provided significant implications for the development of adequate assistance and relief systems for women.

37. The ICT training programme for APEC Member Economies has drawn a favourable response from participants, with a minimum of 90 per cent of trainees on average having expressed high satisfaction. Among many APEC partners, the programme is evaluated as a best practice for women's empowerment. The Korean

[14] Gurumurthy, Anita, with Parminder Jeet Singh and Anja Kovacs (2009). Recasting the Beijing Platform for Action through the Information Society Lens: A Conceptual and Action Framework. http://www.unapcict.org/ecohub/resources/recasting-the-beijing-platform-for-action-through-the-information-society-lens-a-conceptual-and-action-framework, retrieved on 19 April 2010.

Government has accordingly expanded the scope of the programme for the year 2010.

38. Second, an E-business Education and Training Programme was newly launched this year to invite women managers and policymakers from developing countries to help them develop their understanding of and build capacity for e-business. Rather than simply delivering theoretical knowledge, the programme is focused on guiding women leaders towards establishing their own e-marketing and business strategies, planning and implementing actual e-business models and acquiring know-how on ways to build an e-business environment. The ultimate objective is to promote women's economic participation in a practical fashion and empower them economically.

39. Third, another new initiative for 2010 is the Vocational Capacity-Building Programme for women in developing countries. Public officials in charge of women's employment and business start-up policies and experts in vocational capacity-building in non-governmental and other organizations are invited to engage in a process of developing adequate occupations for women in their home countries and devising a systemic national approach to women resources development. The aim is to empower policymakers and experts so that they may effectively facilitate the employment and business start-ups of women, and to raise awareness of female capacity through leadership education. By providing education and training on development to site experts and policymakers, the Republic of Korea is expanding cooperation with various non-governmental organizations in partner countries rather than confining the training partnership to the Government level. The budget allocated to carry out these two newly launched programmes amounts to 9[illegible] million Korean won (equivalent to $0.8 million).

IV. Conclusion

40. The Republic of Korea's rapid economic and social development, often referred to as the "Miracle on the Han River", is widely recognized by the international community as a good example of development. It is noteworthy that this process of socio-economic development did not exclude women, which resulted in corresponding progress in women's development.

41. As the latest member to join the OECD Development Assistance Committee, the Korean Government is carrying out mid- to long-term ODA programmes under a comprehensive strategy that envisions advancement in all aspects of ODA policies, aid volume, implementation system, partnership-building and evaluation system. The Republic of Korea clearly recognizes the importance of cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality and the environment, and is developing tools to strengthen gender mainstreaming in ODA implementation as well as to plan effective gender-sensitive aid programmes.

42. The Republic of Korea is eager to share its development experience as a way of enhancing both the socio-economic participation and capacity-building of women in the developing parts of the world.

43. Therefore, the Republic of Korea will make efforts to formulate strategic assistance programmes in areas of comparative strength, and at the same time, commit to achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.